

256 COMMENTARY ON MACAULAY'S
HISTORY

Sybel's *Historische Zeitschrift* for *i&6j*«^l His verdict is that Macaulay had but a superficial knowledge of the European events of the period he treated : it seldom extended beyond the facts to be found In any good general history. He rarely contributed any new information about foreign affairs, and when he did his researches went but a little way, not to the bottom of the matter. Von Noorden goes on to say that French and English historians alike were mostly too prone to neglect European history. They considered events which happened In other countries too exclusively In their effect on their own countries. Hence they did not judge either men or events with sufficient Independence, nor carry their researches far enough to form a really impartial judgement.

Nowadays this criticism would not be true, but it certainly applied to Macaulay. He did not devote a tithe of the attention to foreign affairs which he devoted to English affairs. What happened abroad, however Important, interested him much less than some relatively trivial incident at home. His comparative neglect of European affairs and his complete neglect of colonial affairs arose from the same cause, Insufficient breadth of view—in a word, from insularity.

Insularity is a failing which English historians naturally find It difficult to avoid. In Macaulay's case It was aggra-

vated by conditions under which he grew up
and by his
surroundings. The Whig party as a whole has
usually been
inclined to concentrate its attention and its
energies on
internal questions, and during the period
which followed
the Battle of Waterloo this tendency was
accentuated. Con-
sidering the debt which the great war had
imposed and the
distress which prevailed in the country after
the peace, it is
not surprising that there was some feeling that
England had

¹ xvii. 87 ; see also p. 107.